

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1 - 5 (canceled)

6. (currently amended) ~~The method as defined in Claim 5~~ In a method for treating cytological or histological specimens in an automatic stainer, the specimens being delivered on object carriers and in object carrier magazines by means of a transport device to various processing stations, inserted therein, and treated in accordance with a definable treatment program, and said transport device being capable, during execution of said treatment program, of moving further objects or object carriers to other processing stations so that a parallel processing or treatment is possible in various processing stations, the improvement comprising the step of:

executing an optimized automatic program sequence according to which identically operating processing stations are defined as backup stations and are correspondingly utilized if a required processing station is occupied, wherein said program sequence takes into account a priority list of identically operating processing stations as backup stations and said priority list is calculated in consideration of defined parameters, wherein the calculation of the priority list is accomplished in consideration of shortest paths.

7. (currently amended) ~~The method as defined in Claim 5~~ In a method for treating cytological or histological specimens in an automatic stainer, the specimens being delivered on object carriers and in object carrier magazines by means of a transport device to various processing stations, inserted therein, and treated in accordance with a definable treatment program, and said transport device being capable, during execution of said treatment program, of moving further objects or object carriers to other processing stations so that a parallel processing or treatment is possible in various processing stations, the improvement comprising the step of:

executing an optimized automatic program sequence according to which identically operating processing stations are defined as backup stations and are correspondingly utilized if a required processing station is occupied, wherein said program sequence takes into account a priority list of identically operating processing stations as backup stations and said priority list is calculated in consideration of defined parameters, wherein the calculation of the priority list is accomplished in consideration of shortest transport times.

8. (previously presented) In a method for treating cytological or histological specimens in an automatic stainer, the specimens being delivered on object carriers and in object carrier magazines by means of a transport device to various processing stations, inserted therein, and treated in accordance with a definable treatment program, and said transport device being capable, during execution of said treatment program, of moving further objects or object carriers to other processing stations so that a parallel processing or treatment is possible in various processing stations, the improvement comprising the step of:

executing an optimized automatic program sequence according to which identically operating processing stations are defined as backup stations and are correspondingly utilized if a required processing station is occupied, wherein said program sequence takes into account a priority list of identically operating processing stations as backup stations and said priority list is calculated in consideration of defined parameters, wherein the calculation of the priority list is accomplished in consideration of current reagent fill levels in said processing stations.

9. (original) The method as defined in Claim 8, wherein said priority list is calculated so as to achieve approximately the same reagent fill levels among said processing stations.